

KTF:MJC

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

C O M P L A I N T

- against -

(18 U.S.C. §§ 1708, and 2)

ERICK MENDOZA,

24-MJ-304

Defendant.

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EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, SS:

MICHAEL LOFORTE, being duly sworn, deposes and states that he is a Postal Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service, duly appointed according to law and acting as such.

On or about April 17, 2024, within the Eastern District of New York and elsewhere, the defendant ERICK MENDOZA did steal, take and abstract any letter, postal card, package, bag, and mail, and any article and thing therein, from and out of any mail, post office, post station, letter box, mail receptacle, mail route, and other authorized depository for mail matter.

(Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1708 and 2)

The source of your deponent's information and the grounds for his belief are as follows:¹

¹ Because the purpose of this Complaint is to set forth only those facts necessary to establish probable cause to arrest, I have not described all the relevant facts and circumstances of which I am aware.

1. I am a Postal Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service (“USPIS”) and have been involved in the investigation of numerous cases involving mail theft and improper use of mail keys. I am familiar with the facts and circumstances set forth below from my participation in the investigation; my review of the investigative file, including the defendant’s criminal history record; and from reports of other law enforcement officers involved in the investigation.

2. To help mail carriers in completing their walking routes, the United States Postal Service (“Postal Service”) has placed green relay boxes at intersections throughout New York City. Before a carrier starts a route, the carrier places mail into bags sorted by location. To avoid carrying all the mail bags during a shift, the carrier has a driver transport them to relay boxes along the route.

3. Each box will carry several bags, so that the carrier may keep the bulk of mail in the boxes as the carrier walks with a smaller delivery load. The carrier returns to the box to refresh the load until the bags are empty, and then continues to another part of the route. Each bag may contain hundreds of mail items.

4. Moreover, each box has a lock that drivers and carriers may open with a Postal Service “arrow key,” each of which has its own serial number. The key is so named because it has the emblem of an arrow with the initials “U.S.P.S.” Based on my experience investigating cases and my interviews with Postal Service employees, the ordinary Postal Service practice is to keep the relay box always locked and to permit only drivers and carriers to open it.

5. Recently, there were reports of mail being stolen on multiple occasions from relay boxes in the Woodside neighborhood in Queens, New York. In response to these reports, the USPIS began conducting surveillance in this neighborhood.

6. On or about April 17, 2024, other law enforcement officers and I were conducting surveillance in the Woodside neighborhood. At approximately 1:40 p.m., law enforcement officers observed a person, wearing a salmon-colored hoodie and dark grey sweatpants, open a relay box near the intersection of 67th Street and 48th Avenue and take out a relay bag. The individual then began walking away with the bag.

7. At this time, other officers and I approached this individual and identified ourselves as law enforcement officers. In response, the individual dropped the relay bag and fled. Other law enforcement officers and I pursued the suspect, later determined to be the defendant ERICK MENDOZA, and arrested him approximately two blocks away near the intersection of 66th Street and 49th Avenue. The relay bag was recovered, as well as an arrow key found on the ground approximately 10 feet from the relay bag, which was determined to be a counterfeit key.

8. I have confirmed that the defendant ERICK MENDOZA is not a Postal Service employee and had no authority to access relay boxes.

WHEREFORE, your deponent respectfully requests that the defendant ERICK MENDOZA, be dealt with according to law.


MICHAEL LOFORTE
Postal Inspector
United States Postal Inspection Service

Sworn to before me this
18th of April, 2024


THE HONORABLE SANKET J. BULSARA
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK